

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Serial No. 09/830,388

Inventor: Collier et al.

REMARKS

Initially, the Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for taking the time to consider the amended independent claim as forwarded in the informal communication of December 31, 2003. After reviewing this claim and discussing the same with the undersigned on January 6, 2004, additional changes were made to the claim and further discussed with the Examiner. Claim 1 as now submitted in this case represents a combination of the changes previously submitted to the Examiner on December 31, 2003 and those discussed with the Examiner on January 6, 2004. During the telephone conversation, the Examiner indicated his belief that claim 1 as amended in this fashion is allowable over the applied prior art in the outstanding Office Action and the remaining art of record. However, the Examiner indicated that further search and consideration would be needed before making a final decision. Given the status of the original application and the additional search/consideration required by the Examiner, the current continuing examination application is being filed with the claim 1 as amended. As claims 39-43 have already been indicated to be allowable, claim 1 represents the only independent claim that does not currently stand allowed in the application.

Based on the above changes to claim 1 and the various communications conducted with the Examiner, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is clearly allowable over the known prior art. Therefore, unless more pertinent prior art can be developed by the Examiner in an updated search, it is respectfully requested that the claims be allowed

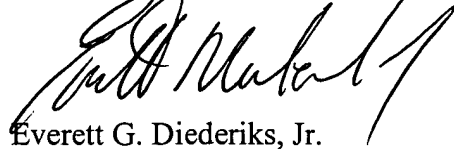
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and the application pass to issue. If the Examiner should have any additional concerns regarding the allowance of this application, he is cordially invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided below if it would further expedite the prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Everett G. Diederiks, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

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